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**LATTER-DAY DEMONS.**

Valedictory Address on retiring from the Presidency of the Chelsea Clinical Society.

By J. FOSTER PALMER.

GENTLEMEN,

In addressing you here for the last time as President of this Society I must express my earnest and heartfelt thanks to you all for the kind and cordial assistance and co-operation you have ever afforded me during the two years I have had the honour of acting in this capacity. It has given me the greatest pleasure to watch and assist in the growth of a young Society and to see the interest taken in the same by others. I only hope that its future progress will be commensurate with its past. With your continued co-operation in attending the meetings and contributing material its success will be assured. Especially have I to thank the Vice-Presidents and other members of the Council for their valued support. By no means do I intend to imply that we have always agreed. Far from it. A Council of which all the members are agreed is a useless nonentity. The function of a Council, if such Council is representative, as it ought to be, and as, I think, ours is, is to settle the disputes which would otherwise spread through the whole Society. I hope we have duly fulfilled our function. At the same time we have always presented a united front to the enemy. It may be asked, "Who is the enemy?" We have many enemies to contend with, immaterial ones mostly; invisible demons many of them, but none the less formidable. There is the demon Ignorance, not only among the public, but sometimes in the profession and among ourselves; and which we are ever striving to conquer. The demon Idleness,

He hoped on through the winter of '95-6, making light of his state, though, his son Bertram tells us, he was in his heart of hearts fully conscious of the change rapidly taking place in him. He died of Bright's disease and diabetes, which, it seems likely, he had had about fifteen years, getting steadily, of course, worse all that time ; so that much of his best work was done in spite of great physical weakness.

a prevalent form of original sin, ever struggling to keep us away from our meetings, and tempting us to postpone the collecting of material for discussion and clinical enlightenment. The demon Superstition, more often seen, we flatter ourselves, outside the profession than within it ;—and lastly, that great legion of foolish fads which, coming, as they often do, under a pseudo-scientific and pseudo-ethical guise, are liable to lead astray the untrained multitude, which, as a rule, looks only at the surface of things. This particular species of fad, the pseudo-scientific, our profession is, owing to its special scientific training, in some degree, we hope, exempt from. Fads are not necessarily evil. There may be, and there have been, those which, by the persistent prominence given to a certain ideal, perhaps even an exaggerated one, have had good results. Those I am referring to, however, and I refer chiefly to those having some more or less close connection with pathological study, are, most of them, the enemies of real progress ; that is, if they are followed without question. On the other hand, the opposition they offer is of the greatest value in stimulating the real workers and seekers after truth. It is this which keeps their armour bright. If we know that we are open to criticism and opposition we are careful of our work : we think ; we test our experiments in order to be sure there is no possibility of error. When we cease to do this our work is useless. Fighting is a necessity of our existence. We must always fight, either for or against ignorance, folly and vice. Be it ours to fight, if not always on the winning, always on the right side, the side of wisdom, of knowledge, and of justice. When we cease to fight we die, or, at any rate, our life is no longer of value in the world. Most men who do any real work have probably some fad. Let us see to it that our fads are founded on reason, on knowledge and on right. Those that are otherwise are often put forward with a persistence and plausibility and popular eloquence which impresses the ignorant multitude more than the sober statements of real workers. The former make up for want of knowledge by extravagance of language ; and noise and mob oratory have not yet lost their power for

good or evil in the world. Education is not yet sufficiently advanced to enable a mixed audience to distinguish sophistry from reason.

There is, perhaps, another reason. I sometimes think that we, as a profession, and, indeed, scientific men generally, have a tendency to clothe our thoughts too much in technical or scientific language. Those who have made the greatest impression on others have always done the contrary. The greatest orator of the century always used the simplest language. It is this tendency, I believe, which has produced, in this country at least, such a widespread impression that the members of our profession are, as a rule, incompetent to make a speech. Those who were present at the annual dinner at the Polyclinic last year will remember how a member of Parliament, Mr. Alfred Lyttleton, in the presence of about 400 members of the profession, held up to scorn and ridicule the speaking powers of the profession generally, and no one present, at any rate no one who spoke, was able to give back a single word by way of repartee. I would suggest that it might possibly be well to cultivate a simpler Anglo-Saxon diction, whether in explaining matters to our patients, in speaking in public or in joining in discussions in our Society. We should not be without precedent. One of the greatest, perhaps the greatest, scientific observer this country has ever seen, John Hunter, habitually used in his lectures the most commonplace colloquial language. In describing a bullet-wound of the abdomen he said that "the ball went into the man's belly and hit his guts such a damned thump that they mortified". No one could possibly fail to understand this or to remember it. At the opposite end of the pole stands Thomas Huxley, whose exuberance of classical diction is far from being conducive to the retention of his statements by those who study his works, as when he informs us in his work on the *Invertebrata* that the "*Echinodermata* possess a remarkable bilaterally symmetrical continuous calcareous skeleton". I do not suggest, as some have done, that we should write our prescriptions in English. There are often sound reasons why patients should not know the exact composition of the remedies

they are taking. There are not many whose acquaintance with *Pharmacopœia* Latin is sufficient to enable them to translate their prescriptions accurately throughout. We should lose, too, in conciseness by writing them in English.

First among the fads founded on folly with which we have, as a profession, been for many years in conflict, is the anti-vaccination mania. Although apparently on the wane, it is still rampant in many places, and is even supported by a few members of the profession. Their actual position it is somewhat difficult to understand. In an absolutely ideal state of sanitation it is, of course, conceivable that small-pox might be eliminated: but this condition does not exist; and, until human nature is something very different to what it is, and the demons of ignorance, idleness and superstition are permanently driven from among us, it will not exist. There remains, of course, the other argument, that the statistics are cooked, or false, or do not bear out the conclusions we derive from them. Still there remain, over and above the statistics (which are of themselves sufficient to convince most minds), the broad facts that (1) small-pox is practically abolished; that (2) within the memory of those still living faces free from scars were rarely seen, while now it is the scarred faces which are rare; that (3) after contact with the disease by the unvaccinated, infection is as certain as quarter-day; and that (4) Prof. Osler has only been able to discover two instances of normal insusceptibility to small-pox, one in Germany and the other in Canada. It is true that typhus has been practically eliminated without inoculation, but typhus is not thus impartial, and does not spread except under certain predisposing conditions. Upon the whole it is difficult to distinguish, by any general principle, the modern exponents of anti-vaccination from those earlier prophets who foretold that mankind, after vaccination, would develop, mentally and morally, the bovine characteristics, and would grow horns like the ox. These prophecies, I believe, have not yet been fulfilled.

Of a far more formidable character is the anti-vivisection mania, which has recently taken on one of its periodical exacerbations. Its growth in this country is largely due, no

doubt, to ignorance of the actual history of the progress of scientific research, which is as difficult of comprehension to those untrained in science as legal technicalities are to those untrained in law. This very ignorance leaves free scope for the brilliant imagination, the literary freedom and the emotional rhetoric of its exponents. Its prevalence is partly due to the ease with which it lends itself to sentimental appeals, but partly also, no doubt, to the cause referred to by Mr. Paget's reviewer, *viz.*, the innate hatred and suspicion which exists in the English mind, and in the English mind only, against all science and its professors. He "bites his thumb" at it. The feeling is probably akin to the jealousy which animates European countries against England. There is, however, I believe, another reason, already referred to. I mean the unduly technical, cramped and ultra-scientific language in which scientists clothe their arguments, while their opponents employ with success all the resources of popular rhetoric and oratory. The latter is swallowed without effort by the large majority, the former can only be grasped by a few exceptionally thoughtful minds. I remember many years ago an argument put forward by Prof. Huxley in the *Nineteenth Century*, which, if it had been impressed on the popular mind in the usual method of the anti-vivisectionists, must have permanently disabled one branch of their supporters. It was something to this effect. If you are standing on a narrow bridge over a wide river, supporting a man with one hand and a dog with the other (it was a thousand dogs, I think), and you must sacrifice one, which must you sacrifice? To drown a man, or wilfully to allow a man to drown, is murder. To drown a dog (or a thousand dogs) is not murder. If, therefore, you save the dogs and let the man go, you are a murderer. If you drown the dogs you save the man's life; and to refuse to save a man's life when you can do so is, morally, to commit a murder. If, on the other hand, you can save a man by sacrificing an animal, you are morally bound to do so. This, assuming the value of experiments on animals, is done every day. To prevent an experiment which would result in saving human life, therefore,

would come under the category of murder, and all who helped to prevent such experiments would be accomplices. Thus, if experiments on animals are of any value, even in prolonging life, all who oppose such experiments are potential murderers. How this argument would be answered I don't know. I have never seen it answered. It was wrapped in such elaborate and high-flown diction that it passed unnoticed.

It seems, no doubt, a sad alternative. We must either starve, or kill and eat millions of animals which during their whole lives have been solely dependent on human protection. Most people choose the latter alternative. If we wish to prolong human life and alleviate human suffering we must also sacrifice a limited number of animals, which are at the mercy of our superior mental and physical powers. But we cannot alter the constitution of the universe ; and the physiologist, with the alternative thus plainly set before him, recognises, and always will recognise, that his fellow human being has the higher claim.

But there is another section of anti-vivisectionists coming under an entirely different head. This section, which it is to be hoped forms the great majority, and which, I believe, includes Mr. Coleridge in its numbers, pins its faith absolutely on the uselessness of experiments. Surely there must be some way of convincing reasonable minds of what is so obvious to nearly the whole profession, indeed to the whole scientific world, the only section of mankind really capable of estimating the results. The work of the bacteriologists, great and important as we know it to have been, may perhaps be objected to as evidence on account of its being in the opinion of some still more or less *sub judice*. But if we had nothing else to go upon, we know, as Sir Lauder Brunton says, that *all* the applications of strychnine are the direct consequences of physiological experiment. None of us can seriously doubt the action of strychnine, not only on the nerve centres generally, but on the respiratory centres in particular ; and most of us have seen life undoubtedly prolonged or saved by this special action.

I am not sure whether I ought to include teetotalism

among the fads. I have expressed my views on it in the MEDICAL MAGAZINE for March, 1900. Perhaps after the publication of Mr. Victor Horsley's experiments they ought to be modified. To me, however, these experiments appear, rightly or wrongly, to be somewhat incomplete. Mr. Horsley measures the effect of alcohol by the rapidity of thought, a process subject to many disturbing influences. The experiments were made, I believe, principally on moderate drinkers. It does not appear that their *normal* rapidity of thought during periods both of non-abstinence and of abstinence, that is, after, say, twelve months' total abstinence, was gauged and compared with the experimental condition. Taking alcohol *alone*, too, is necessarily *abnormal*. I did not see that any experiments were made on the effects of alcohol accompanied by a good dinner and pleasant companions. This, I maintain, is the normal and natural method of taking it. Mr. Horsley's experiments refer to alcohol taken alone. I do not advocate, and never have advocated, the taking of nips of alcohol on an empty stomach. Let us consider, then, the *normal* method of taking alcohol, *e.g.*, at dinner. To all *appearance* thought and conversation flow more rapidly under the influence of wine. This appearance, however, Mr. Horsley tells us, is deceptive. The time must be measured by the clock, and will then be found to be prolonged instead of shortened. Perhaps it is well it should be so, or our stock of conversation might be exhausted before dinner was over. To test the matter and measure the actual rapidity of thought, we must take out our watch and see how long it takes to *begin* to answer a question put to us by one of our companions. A difficult experiment, truly, to make at a dinner-party, but this is the only way in which the matter can be satisfactorily demonstrated. As I understand Mr. Horsley's method, it is something like this. We measure, for instance, the mental activity by the time it takes a man to understand a joke. We take, as a standard, a man of rather feeble mental capacity. Without alcohol it would take him say, *two minutes*. If, on the other hand, he had had a small dose of alcohol it would, according to Mr. Horsley's conclusions, take him *three minutes*. The subject

of the experiment himself, however, would *believe* the time to be shortened, and the process would *appear* to him to have occupied only *one minute*. Subjectively, therefore, his mental powers would be stimulated, objectively they would be depressed. If "life is but thought" it is by no means clear that he would be altogether the loser. The net result then of this series of experiments simply amounts to this, that alcoholic stimulants (or what we used to call alcoholic stimulants) are not stimulants at all, but depressants causing a delusive feeling of stimulation. It is after all only a calling of old things by new names. "That which we *call* a glass of port by any other name would taste as good." The actual physiological or therapeutical value of alcohol remains entirely unaffected. And we have yet to learn that in these days of high pressure and excessive nerve action a certain slowing of mental processes is an unmixed evil. After all then the only special lesson for us seems to be that (pending further experiments) we have to bear in mind when taking alcohol that we are taking, not a stimulant, but a depressant, and that we may without breaking any physiological law continue to drink whisky if we call it something else. I hope this judgment will be duly recorded as a precedent for the future guidance of the Society.

I must now thank you for the kind attention you have given to my few concluding remarks, which, if occasionally they have appeared somewhat flippant, have covered a very real feeling of gratitude and appreciation, and a very hearty wish for the future progress of the Society, which I now leave in other hands.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

By W. H. ALLCHIN, M.D. (Lond.), F.R.C.P.

(Continued from page 103.)

ENCOURAGED by the support to their views which the Association met with from the teachers in the various Faculties in the metropolitan schools of University rank, the Executive Committee early in the following year (1886) proceeded in accordance with the instructions they had received at the general meeting "to open communications with the Governing Bodies of the University of London, University College, King's College, the Royal College of Physicians of London, the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and the various medical schools of London, as well as with the Council of Legal Education, for the purpose of promoting the objects of the Association on the basis of their first Report". In the exercise of the power conferred upon them at their election the Committee increased their numbers by the addition of Sir Dyce Duckworth, M.D. ; Dr. Russell, F.R.S. ; and Professors Adams, Curnow, Berkeley Hill, Hudson, Henry Morley, Scrutton and Gerald Yeo. A full statement of the proposals before the Association, based upon the first Report of the Executive Committee and upon the previous Reports of the Sub-Committees for the several Faculties of Arts, Science and Medicine already referred to, was prepared and communicated to the above-mentioned Governing Bodies, together with a covering letter explaining the intended bearing of the proposals set forth in the statement upon the Institution addressed. The outcome

